



The Department of Education announces the implementation of “Ciclo Avenza”

During a press conference conducted on Thursday morning, June 22, Roosleen Oduber, Director of the Department of Education and Minister of Education, Marisol Lopez Tromp, announced that the implementation of “Ciclo Avenza” will begin with the coming school year.

Joining Ms. Oduber and the minister in informing the public of the changes in Aruba’s educational system were Mariska Dania, Inspector of General Education, Anna Marie Proveyer, Director of Curriculum and Content for the department, and Gina Botta, representing SHA. SHA is the organization that is implementing and monitoring the changes and its affects on the students and schools.

In 2004, a more interactive system of learning that has been in use in Holland and around the world for a number of years was put into practice for the first two years of the MAVO, HAVO and VWO levels of education, and this was dubbed “Ciclo Basico.” These years are the equivalent of the seventh and eighth grade of American schools. After surveys conducted amongst teachers, students and parents, the staff of SHA and the Department of Education has decided to implement the program for the higher grades.

The “Ciclo Basico” and “Ciclo Avenza” system is a departure from the previous practice of a teacher standing in front of a class lecturing, and involves the students much more in their education. Groups are formed, research projects are assigned, and the youth learn to seek out the information and impart it to their fellow students. This system also requires a modernization of books and materials, and educators also recognize the importance in particular of increasing computer literacy.

“Ciclo Avenza ” will be implemented in two more years for the MAVO schools, three more for the HAVO and four for the VWO advanced college preparatory program. Officials of the Department of Education feel that this system will better prepare Aruba’s youth for the future, providing a livelier and more stimulating environment for learning. For the improved understanding of this new system of education an “Education Fair” will be conducted on Saturday, August 26 at the Renaissance Convention Center in Oranjestad. The hours of the fair will be from 2:00 PM until 6:00 PM in the afternoon, and staff of the Department of Education will be there to demonstrate the new materials and explain the innovations in Aruba’s secondary schools. The public is strongly encouraged to attend.

At this same press conference, Mariska Dania took the time to announce that the majority of the results (70%) from the Exam classes of MAVO and EPB have been reported, and the department is very pleased with the number of students, between 75 % to 85% passing their exams on the first attempt. In the more difficult levels of HAVO and VWO, the results are not final, but would appear to be 41% and 57% respectively. Ms. Dania stated that a second opportunity to pass the exams will be offered, at a date to be announced.

The education and future of the island’s youth is of paramount importance to all Arubans, as was evidenced by the unprecedented number of press representatives at the conference. A very lively Q & A afterwards showed the concerns of islanders as Aruban educators deal with the quite unique elements of our educational system. Tradition has been for years that school was taught from kindergarten on in Dutch, as most Aruban children would likely go on to University in Holland, or even possibly to live there. The legal language of Aruba is Dutch, and it is the language of official documentation and contracts, but the language of the Aruban people is Papiamentu, and this is what is usually spoken in many homes and on the street. Papiamentu is still an emerging, developing language, but psychological tests have proven that children *do* initially learn information best in their native language, the language in which they think. Aruba is a multi-cultural, multi-linguistic island in which also English and Spanish are spoken in the homes, and these languages are taught on a mandatory basis from the sixth grade on. Only in recent years has Papiamentu been introduced in the schools as a language course, and all subjects are still taught in Dutch, including math courses, the sciences, history, economics, and sociology. This is of a necessity as learning materials in these subjects, such as texts and workbooks do not exist in Papiamentu. Educators are wrestling with this problem, as it puts quite a burden on the student in mastering their subjects, so performance in these subjects may not be as high as it could be. Aruban educators have been dealing with this for generations, and Anna Marie Proveyer revealed that educators Holland, where they are now facing the same dilemma, working with a more multi-cultural society since the creation of the European Union, are looking to Aruba as an example of handling it successfully. At this time, the emergence of Papiamentu, and the movement towards establishing it as the dominate language of Aruba challenges island educators. This was of quite some interest and concern to the press during Thursday’s meeting, aside from other issues. Those present conducting the meeting suggested they address them during the Educational Fair, and

acknowledged that it is a factor in the changes in Aruba's educational system, which, in combination with the implementation of the "Basico Avensa" will completely revolutionize the education of Aruba's youth.